

# Objects That Tell Stories



In the basement of the Spalding Visitor Center, behind an innocuous brown door, you will find the collection storage area for Nez Perce National Historical Park (NHP). In this dark, climate controlled room are thousands of objects that help tell the story of a people who have been in what today is north central Idaho since the beginning of time. When the curator pulls open the drawers of each cabinet, you can almost hear each object speaking about its past. Just as people tell stories, so do objects.

The object featured above appears to be nothing more than a pointed stick with a handle. In fact, it’s much more. This object is a tool used by Nez Perce root diggers to harvest camas bulbs. The camas bulb, much like salmon, has significance for the Nez Perce beyond its value as a source of vitamins and minerals. Camas is a sacred food that is treated with respect and seen as gifts from haniyawá:t (The Creator). The bulbs are still harvested using tú-kes (digging sticks). The long, curved stick of the tú-kes is used for loosening the soil and gently removing the roots, bulbs, and other plants from the ground. This one is made of fire hardened yew and a handle of bone, however, historically they could also be made from the horns of the big horn sheep. It was probably made in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Many modern digging sticks

are made from iron. However, they still follow the time-honored design to insure that not a great deal of soil was distributed, and to make the field look as though no one had been there. The modern tú-kes still has a pointed tip, designed to only harvest one root at a time.

The digging stick is just one item in the park’s museum collection that includes over 250,000 objects from 11,000 years ago to today. Bob Chenoweth, the park’s curator has been managing the collection since 1995. According to Chenoweth, “The NEPE collection is probably the finest institutional collection of Nez Perce material culture anywhere in the world. It stunningly represents thousands of years of culture, and creative energy, and is a source of inspiration and great pride for all Plateau people.”

In 2007, with the cooperation of the National Park Service Museum Management Program, the park created a virtual museum of approximately 200 objects accompanied by historical photographs and archival materials and put it on the park’s website. It is available at <http://www.nps.gov/history/museum/exhibits/nepe/index.html> or by going to the front page of the Nez Perce NHP website and pressing the button that will take you directly to the virtual museum.

**Archeological sites, battlefields and artifacts are protected by state and federal law. Anyone who injures, destroys or appropriates artifacts or objects of antiquity on park lands is subject to arrest and prosecution to the maximum extent of the law.**


**Please call (208) 843-7001 in Idaho and (406) 689-3155 in Montana to report incidents.**



Looking for a hands-on way to help the park? Consider sharing your time and talents as a Nez Perce VIP (Volunteer-In-Parks). Volunteers are needed throughout the year to help staff our visitor center, present interpretive and education programs and help out with miscellaneous tasks. If you are interested, please call the volunteer manager at the Spalding visitor center at (208) 843-7038 or Big Hole National Battlefield at (406) 689-3155.

## Nez Perce National Historical Park - Quick Reference

<p><b>Nez Perce National Historical Park</b> PO Box 1000 Lapwai, ID 83540</p> <p>The summer schedule is available on park’s website at <a href="http://www.nps.gov/nepe">www.nps.gov/nepe</a></p> <p>Phone: (208) 843-7001 Fax: (208) 843-7003 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:NEPE_Visitor_Information@nps.gov">NEPE_Visitor_Information@nps.gov</a></p> <p>Spalding Visitor Center Located ten miles east of Lewiston, Idaho on U.S. Highway 95.</p> <p>Summer: Memorial Day to Labor Day - Daily 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Rest of the Year: Daily, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm Closed: Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s.</p> <p>The visitor center offers exhibits, films, and a bookstore on Nez Perce culture and history. Restrooms are accessible.</p> <p>Park film has open captions and audio description is available for the park film and museum exhibit.</p>	<p><b>Big Hole National Battlefield</b> PO Box 237 Wisdom, MT 59761</p> <p>The summer schedule is available on park’s website at <a href="http://www.nps.gov/biho">www.nps.gov/biho</a></p> <p>Phone: (406) 689-3155 Fax: (406) 689-3151 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:BIHO_Visitor_Information@nps.gov">BIHO_Visitor_Information@nps.gov</a> Website: <a href="http://www.nps.gov/biho">www.nps.gov/biho</a></p> <p>Visitor Center Located ten miles west of Wisdom, Montana on State Highway 43.</p> <p>Summer: May 27 - September 6, 2006 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Rest of the Year: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed: Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s</p> <p>The visitor center offers exhibits, a film, and a bookstore on the Nez Perce War of 1877.</p> <p>Restrooms and visitor center are accessible.</p>	<p><b>Bear Paw Battlefield</b> 301 Ohio Chinook, MT 59523</p> <p>Phone: (406) 357-3130 Fax: (406) 357-3140 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:NEPE_Bear_Paw@nps.gov">NEPE_Bear_Paw@nps.gov</a> Website: <a href="http://www.nps.gov/nepe">www.nps.gov/nepe</a></p> <p>Visitor Center Located in the Blaine County Museum 501 Indiana St., Chinook, Montana.</p> <p>Summer: Memorial Day to Labor Day Mon. to Sat. 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Closed between noon and 1 pm Sunday: Noon to 5:00 pm. Rest of the Year: Monday through Friday, 1pm to 5pm</p> <p>Bear Paw is 16 miles south of Chinook, Montana on Route 240. The battlefield is open daily from dawn to dusk with a self guided trail, picnic tables, and vault toilets.</p> <p>Fees: Free</p>
--	--	---

	<p><b>Comments?</b> Editor, Nez Perce NHP PO Box 1000 Lapwai, ID 83540-6086</p> <p><b>Photography Credits</b> Nez Perce National Historical Park National Park Service</p>	<p>The <i>Visitor Guide</i> is published by Nez Perce National Historical Park and Big Hole National Battlefield in cooperation with Discover Your Northwest and the Glacier Association.</p>	<p><b>Discover Your Northwest</b> 164 S. Jackson St. Seattle WA 98104-3627 (877) 874-6775</p> <p><b>Glacier Association</b> P.O. Box 310 West Glacier, MT 59936-0310 (410) 888-5756</p>
---	--	---	---





# Visitor Guide



The canoe on display was found by a University of Idaho Archaeologist on private land along Penawawa Creek in 1966. It's 29 feet long and two feet wide at its widest point. It was made from a single Douglas Fir tree and is typical for canoes produced in this area. In the background is a mural done by Nez Perce artist Nakia Williams, depicting a fishing village along Lapwai creek in the 1820s.

## Welcome to the Park



Welcome to Nez Perce National Historical Park. I invite you to experience a park that is not a typical unit of the national park system.

Established in 1965, this national historical park is devoted to telling the story of a people who have lived here since the beginning of time.

We invite you to look at the exhibits and films at the park's two visitor centers in Spalding, Idaho and Wisdom, Montana to learn more about the history, culture, and contributions of the Nez Perce. If you need more information, our rangers are here to help about activities going on in the park and how to access the park's sites. Enjoy your visit!

Gary Somers  
Superintendent

## Rivers of Life

On your way to the Spalding visitor center, you may have noticed at the port of Lewiston, Idaho barges lined up to take wheat, logs, and finished lumber on a journey that might take these products half way around the world. On a quiet morning in the fall, you might also spy a fisherman in hip waders, anxiously waiting for that next fish to be lured to their hook. Long before American commerce flowed on the Snake, and sports fishing dominated the Clearwater, the Nez Perce were using these rivers. The homeland of the Nez Perce is crisscrossed by several rivers – the Clearwater, Selway, Lochsa, Snake, Imnaha – and they drain into the mighty Columbia River.

Canoes were the primary form of transportation. The shape of dugout canoe suggests its original form – a log. Canoes were made from tree trunks that were either purposely cut down or had washed up on shore as they floated down the rivers. Using fire and scraping tools, logs were hollowed out and smoothed. The canoes are designed to be propelled by one person using either a paddle or a pole.

Until the arrival of the horse, the Nez Perce walked and used dugout canoes to get around and for fishing. In historic times, permanent village sites were established close to rivers allowing ease of access. As the Nez Perce culture continued to evolve, the daily patterns of their lives began to ebb and flow with the change of seasons and rivers continued to play an important role. As suggested in the mural

that you see above, Nez Perce families and bands would set up temporary fish camps along the rivers to take advantage of the spring and fall salmon runs. Canoes were indispensable tools when the Salmon were running, allowing the Nez Perce to use nets and spears to catch fish.

The dominant river of the region is the Columbia. Every river in north central Idaho drains into the Columbia. Ten miles from the park's visitor center, is the confluence of the Clearwater with the Snake. The Snake River, which begins in the mountains of Yellowstone, eventually meets the mighty Columbia. In historic times, the Snake River flowed free and allowed the Nez Perce relatively easy access to the lower half of the Columbia.

As the Cascades rise up from the arid plains of eastern Washington and Oregon, the great falls known as Celilo created a jumble of rapids that slowed travel down the river. The falls created a bottleneck that allowed for fishing, which occurred for generations until it was inundated by the Dalles Dam. Celilo, however, was more than a salmon fishery, it was a place where the Nez Perce could trade for materials from the coast.

While the construction of the dams in the Columbia River drainage have diminished the wild salmon runs, the Nez Perce continue to play a role in caring for the rivers that continue to support the people and communities of the region.



Delicate Arch, Arches National Park  
(NP Photo)

## America's Best Idea

Why are you visiting this Park? What brought you here today? It's a question that documentary filmmaker Ken Burns has been exploring for the past several years.

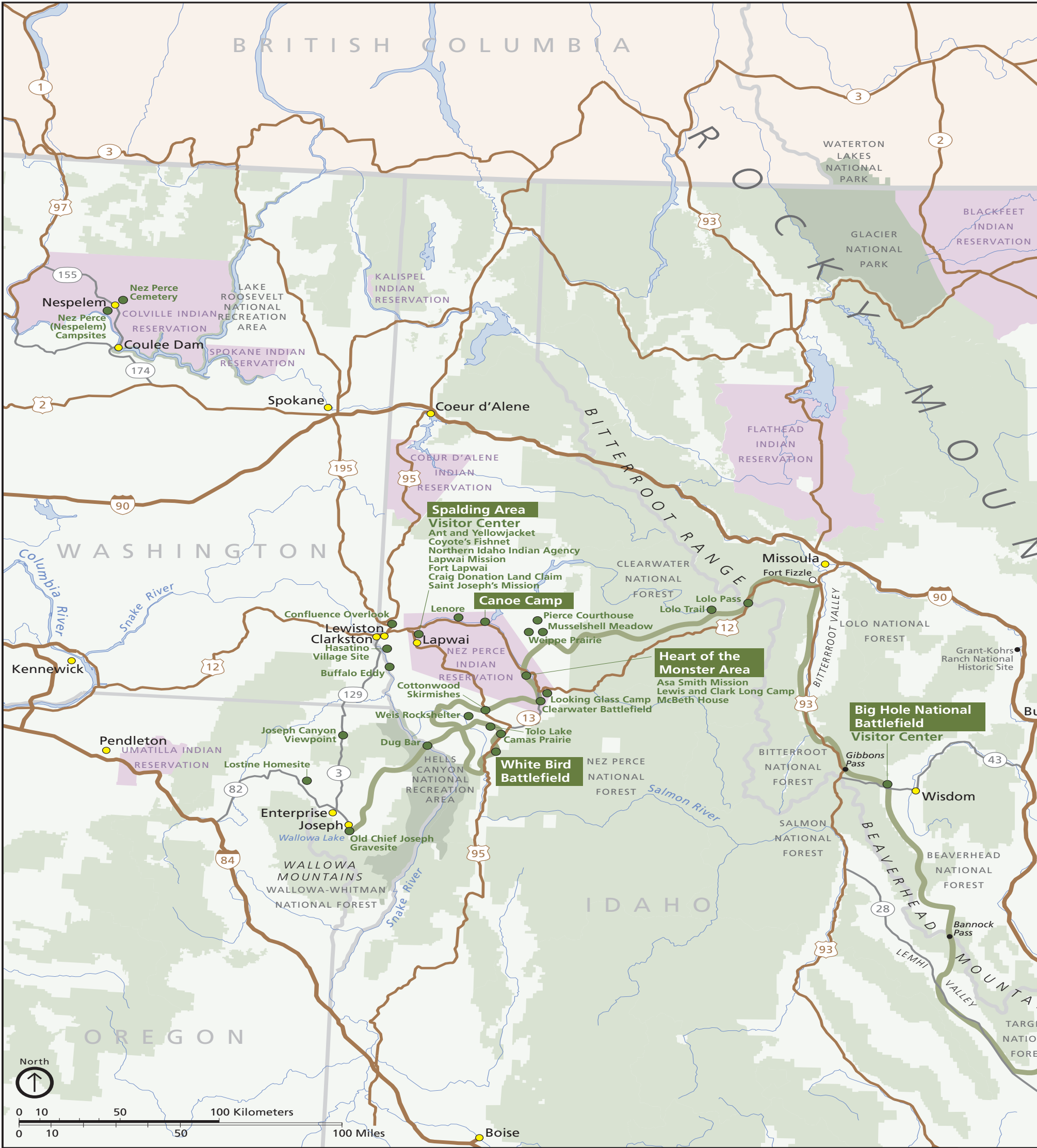
The title refers to a quote from writer and environmentalist Wallace Stegner, who mused that the "National parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst." In the fall of 2009, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) will broadcast a six part, twelve hour series celebrating the founding and

evolution of America's National Parks.

Filming began ten years ago, allowing Burns and his team to film in nearly all of the nation's National Parks. Scenic shots from nearly all of the nation's 58 National Parks will be mixed with archival footage and photographs and supplemented with first-person accounts from historic characters as well as personal memories and analysis collected from more than 40 interviews.

The series will be aired in the fall of 2009 on PBS. For more information, please check your local PBS station website.





Idaho

Confluence Overlook

Donald MacKenzie established a trading post near the confluence of the Clearwater River in September 1812. The Nimiipuu were not interested in the fur trade and MacKenzie sold out to the British.

Coyote’s Fishnet

Coyote and Black Bear got into an argument. In frustration, Coyote threw his fishing net on a hill and tossed Black Bear on another, turning him into stone. Both features are visible today.

Ant and Yellowjacket

Ant and Yellowjacket were arguing over who had the right to fish for Salmon when they got into an argument. Coyote asked them to stop. They continued to fight, whereby Coyote turned them into a stone arch that is visible today.

Spalding

The Spalding site has seen many uses by the Nimiipuu and was the location of Henry and Eliza Spalding’s mission. The park’s visitor center and museum is located here as well. Nearby is where the Spalding’s first settled in 1836.

Northern Idaho Indian Agency

As part of the treaty process, the U.S. Government set up an agency to oversee the implementation of the terms of the treaties.

Fort Lapwai

In 1862, a detachment of volunteers chose this location for their fort. The 1883 officers’ quarters at the southwest end of the parade ground is one of the few original buildings to have survived.

Craig Donation Land Claim

This is the site of the claim by the first Euro-American settler in Idaho. William Craig was a mountain man, an interpreter, and friend of the Nimiipuu.

St. Joseph’s Mission

This was the first Roman Catholic mission among the Nimiipuu. It was dedicated in Sept. 1874 by Father Joseph Cataldo, who had built it. *The church and grounds are currently closed.*

Cottonwood Skirmishes

Skirmishes with the U.S. Army and volunteers occurred near here on July 3 and 5, 1877.

Weis Rockshelter

More than 8,000 years ago humans first made this home and continuously inhabited the area until about 600 years ago.

Camas Prairie

Where wheat fields stretch to the horizon today, camas once grew. Camas bulbs were a major food source for the Nimiipuu. They gathered here in late summer and early fall to dig them.

Tolo Lake

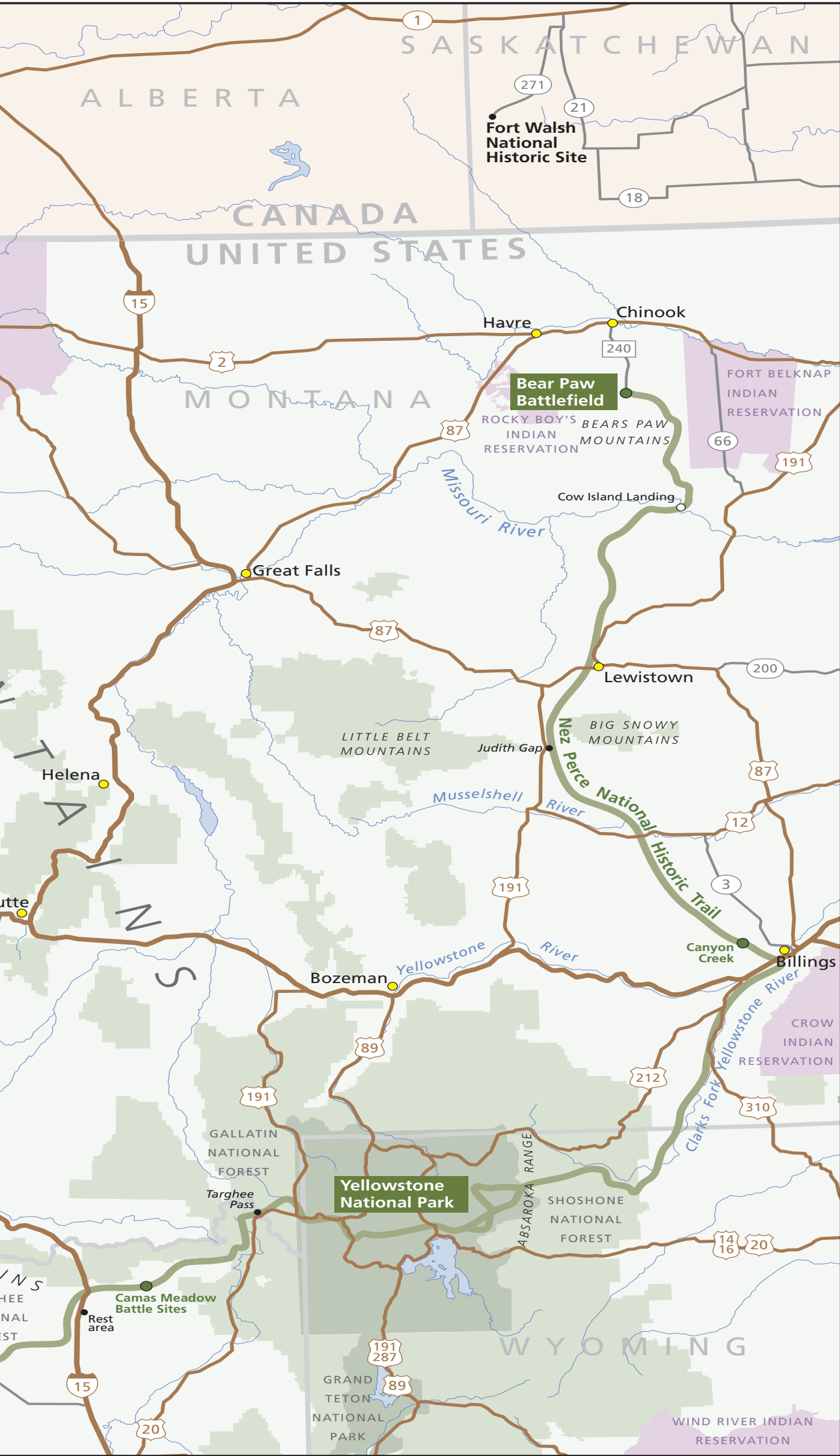
In 1877, the non-treaty bands congregated at this ancient council site, known as Tephahleam, before moving onto the reservation. Frustrated by injustices against the Nez Perce, three Nimiipuu warriors raided homesteads on the Salmon River from this site.

White Bird Battlefield

On June 17, 1877, the first battle of the Nez Perce War was fought here. The U.S. cavalry was defeated with heavy losses and the Nimiipuu began their long journey to find safety and sanctuary. A self-guided walking tour of the battlefield is available at the trailhead.

Clearwater Battlefield

On July 11, 1877 Gen. Oliver O. Howard crossed the Clearwater River and hoped to take the Nez Perce by surprise.



### Montana

**Big Hole National Battlefield**  
On the morning of August 9, 1877, U.S. troops surprised the Nez Perce who crossed the Bitterroots trying to evade capture. Between 60 and 90 Nez Perce men, women, and children were killed. The Army lost 29 soldiers and 40 wounded.

**Canyon Creek**  
After emerging from Yellowstone National Park, the Nez Perce were pursued by the cavalry. In a rearguard action the Nez Perce were able to gain time by successfully stopping the pursuing troops.

**Bear Paw Battlefield**  
Just 40 miles short of the Canadian border, the Nez Perce were besieged by the Army. With losses mounting, Joseph gave his rifle to General Howard, ending the seige on October 5, 1877. They had traveled 1,170 miles in the nearly four months since the first skirmishes.

### Oregon

**Dug Bar**  
At this traditional crossing of the Snake River, Joseph and his band crossed in May, 1877 as they left their homes in Oregon for the reservation in Idaho. Located in Hell’s Canyon National Recreation Area, the site is accessible by either boat or a high clearance vehicle.

**Joseph Canyon Viewpoint**  
The canyon seen from the overlook was one of the winter homes of the Nez Perce. Tradition holds that Chief Joseph was born in a cave along the east bank of the creek. Restrooms are available.

**Old Chief Joseph’s Gravesite**  
The remains of the elder Chief Joseph were reburied here in 1926. Nearby are the graves of other Nez Perce and some settlers.

**Lostine Campsite**  
At the junction of the Lostine and Wallowa Rivers is a traditional Nez Perce summer campsite where Old Chief Joseph died in 1871. This landscape has changed little from the days before the area was settled. **Not a developed site.**

### Washington

**Burial Site of Chief Joseph the Younger**  
In 1885 Chief Joseph and his band were allowed to return to the Northwest from Indian Territory in Oklahoma. Joseph spent his remaining years on the Colville Reservation and died here in 1904. **The cemetery is private property and a sacred place.**

**Nez Perce Campsites at Nespelem**  
Chief Joseph’s band continued their traditional way of life while living on the Colville Reservation. These were their winter and summer homes and were the last places where Joseph lived. **Not a developed site.**

**Buffalo Eddy**  
The unique petroglyphs of this area are evidence of the longevity of the Nimiipuu occupation of the area. Defacing federal archeological sites is a criminal offense.

### Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail

In 1986, Congress established the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail to commemorate the 1877 War. The trail begins at Wallowa Lake, Oregon and extends 1,170 miles to the Bear Paw Battlefield, Montana. The trail is managed by the U.S. Forest Service Further Information can be found on the web at: [www.fs.fed.us/npnht/](http://www.fs.fed.us/npnht/).

His hopes came to naught and the fighting ended with the Nimiipuu withdrawing.

**Heart of the Monster**  
This is the location of the Heart of the Monster, where Coyote defeated a monster and, in turn, created the Nimiipuu. Audio stations tell the story in English and in the Nimiipuu languages.

**Asa Smith Mission**  
In April 1839, Rev. and Mrs. Asa Smith established a mission in the Kamiah area. Unsited to the demands of such work, the Smiths left in 1841.

**Lewis and Clark Long Camp**  
Near here Lewis and Clark camped in the spring of 1806 for nearly a month.

**Canoe Camp**  
In the early fall of 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition rested here and built canoes of hollowed-out logs for the final leg of their trip to the Pacific Ocean.

**Lenore**  
For thousands of years, this village site was used by the Nez Perce and their ancestors.

**Weippe Prairie**  
This was a root-gathering place for the Nimiipuu and it was here on September 20, 1805, that Lewis and Clark first met the Nez Perce. During the 1877 War, the Nimiipuu gathered here after the Battle of the Clearwater.

**Pierce**  
In September 1860, gold was found on the Nez Perce reservation, triggering another treaty that reduced the size of the reservation. The other site of interest is the old Shoshone County courthouse, completed in 1862 and the oldest public building in Idaho.

**Musselshell Meadow**  
For many generations, Nimiipuu have come here to dig for camas. General Howard camped here at the end of July, 1877 while pursuing the Nez Perce over the Lolo Trail.

**Lolo Pass and Trail**  
This historic Nez Perce trail was used by Lewis and Clark in 1805 and 1806. During the 1877 War the Nez Perce followed the trail on into Montana. The U.S. Forest Service maintains a visitor center at Lolo Pass. During the summer months it is open daily. In the off season, they are open on weekends. Please contact the Forest Service at (208) 942-1234 for more information on hours and activities.

**Looking Glass’ 1877 Campsite**  
The Looking Glass Band tried to remain neutral in the conflict between the non-treaty Nez Perce. The Army attacked the village. Looking Glass regarded this as treachery and joined the others against the Army.

**Hasotino**  
Hasotino was a site used until the end of the nineteenth century and was located near an important eel fishery.

**Camas Meadow Battle Site**  
After the tragedy at Big Hole, the Nimiipuu gained time by stealing more than 200 of the Army’s pack mules and horses, halting their advance.